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SUBJECT: MOSCOW VIEWS ON OSCE MINISTERIAL

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Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Russia recognizes that the OSCE Ministerial in Madrid November 29-30 will be difficult, even though there have been a number of areas of agreement this past year. Russia will press for its package of reforms to the OSCE, arguing the need for equal treatment of all countries. Putin's November 26 accusations that the U.S. drove ODIHR's decision not to send monitors to the December 2 Duma elections will further stiffen the GOR's approach to restricting ODIHR's autonomy. Russia may raise U.S. missile defense plans at the Ministerial lunch. Russia will continue to oppose a Convention unless members agree to work on a Charter; will support downsizing the Mission in Croatia, and oppose automatic extension of the mandate for Kosovo; will support expanding OSCE activity in Afghanistan, but oppose an OSCE mission there; and will support OSCE activities in Central Asia, provided the countries agree. Russia sees some positive movement in Moldova, but considers the situation in Georgia "deplorable," and warns that a Kosovo UDI could resonate beyond other frozen conflicts. Russia will oppose a Ministerial Declaration that includes reference to the Istanbul Commitments. End summary.

OSCE Focus on Pol-Mil Issues

12. (C) We reviewed U.S. priorities for the November 29-30 OSCE Ministerial (reftel) with MFA OSCE officer Denis Gonchar November 21. Gonchar told us Russia hoped the Ministerial would be "fruitful," especially considering that difficult issues like CFE and Kosovo were still unresolved. He said it was "good" that the organization was "getting back to the most significant spheres of OSCE work - political-military issues." The U.S. and Russia were cooperating well in many areas, including the Public-Private-Partnership on counterterrorism (PPP), and the INF Treaty and Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The OSCE should do more to support the UN's antiterrorism activities, he contended. He noted that there were "positive signals" in the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) on disarmament and confidence-building measures, and said if the FSC was able to reach an agreement on how to universalize the INF Treaty, Russia would raise it in Madrid.

13. (C) Gonchar said Russia would not put U.S. missile defense on the agenda for Madrid, but he said he could not guarantee that FM Lavrov would not raise it at the lunch.

OSCE Needs Reform

14. (C) Gonchar said Russia had proposed reforms for the OSCE because the situation in the OSCE was "deplorable." The OSCE had practices that undermined the effectiveness of the

organization, and frequently breached principles, like the principle of equality. There was no transparency and no mechanisms to ensure equal treatment and evenhandedness, including for ODIHR. The members needed to restore a "constructive dialogue" in OSCE rather than use the forum to criticize or humiliate countries. Russia welcomed the Spanish initiative on tolerance, he said, noting that Russia had its own problems with ethnic and religious minorities. It was not useful, he added, when the dialogue turned into confrontation. The OSCE did not treat member countries equally and lacked written, agreed procedures for choosing the Chairman-in-Office or monitoring elections. If the OSCE had wanted to tell Kazakhstan it was not democratic, it should have done so before Kazakhstan joined. Regardless, Gonchar noted that the OSCE had no procedures for determining if a country was headed in a non-democratic direction and handling it.

ODIHR Operating as "Jewel in the Crown"

¶5. (C) Gonchar said Russia did not want to ruin the work of ODIHR, but wanted it to be open, transparent, understandable and based on the decisions of all the member countries. Currently, ODIHR had a double standard and was politicized. Why was it acceptable to send 16 monitors to the U.S. elections, but sending 70 to Russia was not enough? There also seemed to be no link between the number of observers and the final post-election report. The report was done by a "small, closed, group of biased people," based on their prejudices. There was no transparency and no consistency. Gonchar argued that ODIHR distinguished between "developing countries" and "democratic countries," when it should treat all countries alike. ODIHR was putting itself above the

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members of the OSCE as the "jewel in the crown," but, Gonchar said, "even a jewel needs to be polished sometimes." Russia hoped to work out the differences between its draft proposal on Basic Principles and the EU's draft on elections. OSCE needed to agree on the standards for election monitoring by ODIHR or it will lose its effectiveness, he said.

¶6. (U) Note: Subsequently, the GOR position on ODIHR further stiffened with Putin's November 26 assertion that ODIHR's decision not to send observers to Russia's Parliamentary elections December 2 had been taken on the basis of a recommendation by the State Department. Citing "absolutely reliable data," Putin claimed ODIHR's decision had come as a surprise to many European countries. He said it was ODIHR's choice, but contended this was why Russia had argued for reforms in the OSCE. End note.

Russia Wants NGO's Registered

¶7. (C) Gonchar said the GOR does not want to restrict the work of NGOs (including ones that criticize Russia), but wants UN-style regulations to apply. For example, he said, the OSCE does not check to see whether an NGO actually exists, or if it has links to extremist activity.

No Convention Without a Charter

¶8. (C) Gonchar reiterated Russia's intent to oppose adoption of a Convention unless and until a Charter for the OSCE was agreed. Russia could lift its opposition to a Convention if Madrid would adopt a decision agreeing to develop a draft of a Charter in 2008. He said Russia did not want to undermine the OSCE's principles or weaken the OSCE's flexibility, but a Charter would provide more predictability and certainty on the mandate, mechanisms and procedures of the organization.

Balkans: Croatia, Kosovo

¶9. (C) Gonchar said Russia supported turning the mission in Croatia into an office of a coordinator with a narrow mandate, and could support closing the mission, but only if another mechanism was found to resolve the outstanding issues.

¶10. (C) Russia opposed an automatic prolongation of the mandate of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK). Gonchar reiterated Russian warnings that a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in Kosovo could provoke Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria to declare independence.

Afghanistan

¶11. (C) Gonchar said Russia supported increasing OSCE activities in Afghanistan, especially in border security and anti-drug trafficking areas, but did not support creating an OSCE mission in Afghanistan due to the security situation and the fact that Afghanistan was not an OSCE member. Russia was prepared to make permanent the training of Afghan police at the Domodedovo Center in Moscow. He said the OSCE should cooperate more with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on Afghanistan.

Central Asia

¶12. (C) According to Gonchar, Russia supported cooperation between the OSCE and Central Asia countries provided it was based on what the countries wanted the OSCE to do. He said it was dangerous to stress human rights too much; there was much instability in Central Asia and it was important to move slowly in efforts to make the countries more democratic.

Ministerial Declaration

¶13. (C) Gonchar said Russia hoped a Ministerial Declaration could be adopted this year, but if the U.S. or others insisted on focusing it on issues like the Istanbul Commitments (which, he said, were purely bilateral), we should not even try. "If the Istanbul Commitments are included in the Declaration, there will be no Declaration," he said.

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